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September 2005

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COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (DEH)
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION (HMD)

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESS



*"Environmental and
Public Health
through leadership,
partnership and
science"*

CHIEF's NOTES

By Michael Dorsey,
HMD Chief



In our March 2004 newsletter I shared with you the news that the Hazardous Materials Division (HMD) was selected by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) to conduct a pilot project aimed at improving regulatory compliance through education. This project is part of CalEPA's *Environmental Protection Indicators for California* program. It looks at reducing the top 10 most common hazardous waste (hw), hazardous materials (hm), and medical waste (mw) violations in the biotechnology, biomedical and research lab industries by 50% over two years. I am happy to report that we have made significant progress.

After several meetings involving both key HMD staff and industry representatives, we identified the following as 10 most common violations within the targeted industry sector in San Diego County:

- Hazardous waste containers with no labels (hw)
- Lack of training records (hw)
- Hazardous waste containers not closed (hw)
- Hazardous waste on site longer than allowed by law (hw)
- Hazardous waste manifest violations (Hazardous Waste)
- No generator information on biohazard bags/sharp containers (mw)
- Biohazard bags not containerized (mw)
- Biohazardous waste warning signs not posted (mw)
- Hazardous materials inventory incomplete/site map not sufficient (hm)
- No annual carcinogen/reproductive toxin list submitted to HMD (hm)

We conducted training sessions for all Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) inspection staff to ensure consistency in applying the standards and regulations that govern these violations. After training CUPA personnel, we held three workshops that were attended by over 200 employees of the biotechnology, biomedical, and research lab industry. Recently, HMD obtained one-time funding which will allow the creation of CDs containing workshop presentations and reference materials that will be distributed to members of the above mentioned industry. The goal of the project is a 25 percent reduction of the most common violations found during inspection by January 2006 and an additional 25 percent by January of 2007. The information gathered at all of our compliance inspections is entered in HMD's database. By doing a query of the violations found during the inspections of businesses participating in this project we will be able to determine if we have reached our goals.

This project is a cooperative effort between the regulators and the regulated community to obtain environmental compliance through education. If successful we will be using this model to improve environmental compliance in other regulated industry sectors within San Diego County.



**HMD's
FEATURED
EMPLOYEE**

María Martínez

María is an intermediate clerk typist for the Hazardous Materials Division. When she is not processing inspections or filing forms, she is diligently working on becoming another DEH success story that began with a high school student summer internship.

Born and raised and still living in the Barrio Logan neighborhood of San Diego, María attended the local schools, including Burbank Elementary, Logan Elementary, Memorial Jr. High, and San Diego High School. One of her 7th grade teachers, Ms. Julie Davies, sparked María's interest in science. Ms. Davies' encouragement and excellence in teaching inspired María to attend college and pursue a degree in a science field.

During María's junior year at San Diego High School, she participated in a program that allowed high school students to take a course at San Diego City College.

María chose a biotechnology class. There was much to learn about DNA, bacterial growth, and the way microorganisms

(continued on page 8)

Begin with Seven *Easy* Steps to Pollution Prevention and Sustainability

By *Ellen Schulte*
Env. Health Specialist III



Being environmentally sensitive and making sustainable choices at home (or work) does not have to be difficult or costly, and may even save you money! Here is an informal list of Seven *Easy* Steps to Pollution Prevention and Sustainability:

Reduce trash

Yes, recycling is good; not having any trash in the first place is better! Consider reusable products or containers. Use reusable shopping bags; some stores may even offer a credit for using these. Buy products in bulk containers and preferably in recyclable containers. Check with your trash company to find out which plastic containers they are recycling. Generally, containers made of plastic types 1 and 2 are recyclable. Plastic type 1 can be recycled into items like carpet, auto parts, paint brushes and industrial paints. Plastic type 2 is recycled into products like detergent, engine oil bottles, trash cans and recycling bins. Close the loop by buying products made from at least 30% "post-consumer recycled content", especially for your office paper purchases.

Reduce your use of plastic

A recent study of the Pacific Ocean found that plastic particles outnumber plankton 6 to 1. Plastic decomposes to a molecular level and takes over 500 years to degrade - more than many radioisotopes! Take a look at a CBS story from earlier this year that highlights the problem of plastic debris in the ocean.

Visit <http://www.cbsnews.com/>

stories/2004/01/06/eveningnews/main591770.shtml

Other studies show plastics may leach chemicals into food products. Consider using glass containers, recycled paper or foil for some of your storage needs.

Reduce your use of hazardous materials

Many of the products we buy may contain hazardous ingredients. Always read the label. If it contains the words **Danger, Poison, Warning** or **Caution**, it includes a hazardous ingredient. The National Institutes of Health sponsors a Web site where you can find the ingredients for household products: <http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov>. Choose a product that can serve many uses, eliminating the need for multiple products. Disposal of unused household hazardous waste is a costly burden to local governments. Safer household alternatives can be found in our local guide, "Put Toxic Waste In Its Place". Get a free copy by calling I Love A Clean San Diego at 1-800-237-2583. Businesses may contact the HMD Pollution Prevention Specialist at 619-338-2324 for safer alternatives that may be available for their industry type.

Reduce your use of motor fuel

Driving less means a cleaner environment for everyone. Ride a trolley, train, bike, or bus, for even part of your trip. The benefits are tremendous. Not only do motor vehicles pollute the air, but fluids from leaking vehicles on the roadway can also cause storm water pollution. Rideshare programs are also available. Visit <http://www.ridelinek.org>.

Save water and energy

California is unique in the United States for its availability of rebates and vouchers to encourage water and energy conservation efforts. Take advantage of these cost saving measures! Contact the San Diego County Water Authority at <http://www.sdcwa.org>; SDG&E at <http://www.sdge.com>; or the San Diego Regional Energy Office at www.sdenenergy.org for more information.

As an example, the cost of installing my home solar system was cut in half using vouchers and now my family of five enjoys an electric bill of \$126 a YEAR (yes, *year* not month)! Act now before these incentives go away!

Share your environmental actions and desires with others

Consider participating in a letter-writing campaign, even if it is only to your local political representative. Are there other environmental issues that may impact you or your community? Let someone know. There is a saying "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" and there is nothing wrong with a well-directed and courteous "squeak" to stimulate change. Consider joining a non-profit or community advocacy group. Finding the right non-profit may take some effort; visit community events, talk to neighbors, friends or co-workers or simply do an Internet search to give yourself an idea of what community groups are doing, promoting, or supporting.

Support Green Businesses and green building

The San Diego Area Green Business Program recognizes businesses that have gone above and beyond their regulatory requirements to protect the environment and conserve resources. Be their customer! In addition, consider green-building practices before planning your home remodel. These practices promote resource conservation such as energy and water efficiencies, and the use of renewable resources and less toxic alternatives. Visit these sites to find out more: San Diego Area Green Business Program at www.sdgreenbiz.org; and the U.S. Green Building Council at: <http://www.greenerbuildings.com>.

Pollution prevention is one of the best ways to protect our environment and natural resources. The annual "National Pollution Prevention Week" will be celebrated from September 19-23, 2005. To find out more on pollution prevention, visit these helpful Web sites:

- Western Regional Pollution Prevention Network at <http://www.wrppn.org>
- National Pollution Prevention Resource Exchange at <http://www.p2rx.org>.

Radiation Incident? Take two pills and call me in the morning...



By Ron Yonemitsu
Senior Health Physicist

As we all know, billions of dollars are being spent on homeland security. There are many changes that we read about or see on the news: tighter border security, training for biological terrorism, new equipment for fire departments and the Coast Guard. The list is endless. One area not mentioned often, however, is the research going on for a drug to protect humans against the effects of radiation.

In an earlier article I mentioned that Potassium Iodide (KI) is only effective for certain events involving a nuclear reactor. What about other events involving radioactive materials or radiation? What about all the different types of radioactive material? What about the radioactive material that created the Hulk?!

The November 2004 issue of Health Physics News published a summary of drugs that could help in an event involving radioactive materials (e.g. a dirty bomb). Most of the drugs used to rid the body of internally deposited radioactive material are specific to a type of radioactive material. Let's see what type of materials are currently available and the type of exposure they can protect against:

1. Ferric ferrocyanide

Also known as Prussian Blue, it is

proven to dramatically reduce the effect of ingested radioactive Cesium by helping excrete it from the body. Unlike KI, which is most effective *before* exposure to radioactive iodine, Ferric ferrocyanide can be taken *after* an event involving Cesium.

2. DTP

(diethylenetriaminepentaacetate)
The Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Pentetate calcium trisodium (Ca-DTPA) and Pentetate zinc trisodium (Zn-DTPA) for treating internally deposited plutonium, americium, and curium. As with Prussian Blue, DTPA helps the body excrete the radioactive material. Zn-DTPA is recommended for pregnant women, children, and those with kidney disease or bone marrow depression. DTPA is usually administered intravenously, but under certain circumstances it can also be administered as a nasal inhalant.

3. Amifostine

This drug is referred to as a radioprotectant because it is used to protect tissues against oxidative damage at the cellular level. Developed by the military, the FDA has approved it for use as a protectant of normal tissues during radiotherapy of head and neck cancers. There are toxic side effects and the effect of taking the drug AFTER exposure to high levels of radiation is unknown.

4. Neumune

Also known as Androstenediol, this drug increases the number of circulating platelets and certain white blood cells of the immune system. Neumune is administered prophylactically. This has been shown to be effective in animals. Since 2002, the FDA has approved drugs for

marketing based on evidence of effectiveness from appropriate animal studies.

5. Neupogen

This drug is administered to patients undergoing chemotherapy to fight bone marrow suppression and boost their ability to fight infections. Its use to treat effects from radiation exposure from something other than cancer therapy is not approved by the FDA.

6. Homspera

This drug is still being developed and has been shown to affect the blood and immune system. Its manufacturer is interested in gaining FDA approval for treatment against large doses of radiation.

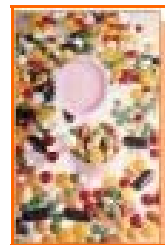
7. Vitamin E

The military has shown that vitamin E does have radioprotective properties when given to mice.

8. Alginates

Seaweed has shown to inhibit absorption of radioactive strontium. This particular seaweed is the kind that floats around in miso soup.

This is just a brief summary of possible treatments for exposure to radioactive materials and high levels of radiation. As you can see, research continues to create a drug that can be taken in the event of a release of radioactive material or high levels of radiation.



As research continues, there may actually be a time when, in the case of a radioactive spill, you'll take two pills and call your doctor in the morning.

Filling Out Monthly Designated Operator Reports for Underground Storage Tank Facilities

By Amy Seigel
Environmental Health Specialist II

Can you believe over six months have passed since the new Designated Operator (DO) requirement began at UST Facilities? Since January, HMD inspectors have reviewed hundreds of completed Designated Operator reports. Some common problems have been found on these reports. In an effort to help designated operators, owners and operators prevent violations during inspections, here is a list of useful tips to keep in mind while filling out monthly operator reports for underground storage tank facilities.

1. Attach Alarm History

If there is a printer on the UST monitor, be sure to attach a copy of the alarm history to the monthly report. If help is needed printing an alarm history, contact the service technician. Failure to attach alarm history will result in a violation.

2. What to do if my monitor does not print the alarm history

If a facility is not able to print an alarm history to attach to the monthly report, ensure that an alarm log is attached. An alarm log should include the date, time, alarm type and location of alarm.



3. Be present when responding to an alarm

Although the DO does not need to be the one to actually open sump lids, he/she must be present to observe corrective actions to alarms.

Maintenance companies can assist with gaining access to sumps.

4. What sumps to inspect

Any sumps or dispensers that have alarmed in the past month must be inspected. This includes fill, turbine, automatic tank gauge, transition, and even vapor sumps.

5. Attach maintenance records for alarms

If there has been an alarm in the past month, note this on the report (section 5a) and attach a copy of the work order indicating how the alarm was addressed. Alarms to record on the report include: *fuel alarm, low liquid alarm, high liquid alarm, sensor out alarm, and pressurized line leak detector shutdown*. Warnings such as *low product* or *delivery needed* do not need to be included on the report. A violation will be issued if repair/maintenance records are not attached to monthly report.

6. Review Report



Ensure that the owner/operator (if different than the DO) reviews this report before the DO leaves the site. If there are items that require follow-up, make this clear to the owner/operator. A violation will be issued if the follow-up items are not corrected before the next monthly report is issued.

7. Check inside all dispensers



When filling out section 8 of the report for under dispenser containment, the DO must physically open each dispenser for a visual observation and record any pertinent remarks. Proper sensor location, and verifying that dispenser is free of water, debris and hazardous substances is part of this check.

It is not acceptable to assume that because an alarm has not gone off in the past month, everything is okay.

To facilitate inspections, ensure that employees are trained as to where environmental records are kept.

8. Maintain paperwork up to date

Sections 9-14 of the report require a paperwork inspection. Ensure all of the required documents are available for review during inspection. If there have been several secondary containment tests, including retests, all of the reports must be present. If any paperwork is missing, it should also be addressed on page 2 of the report under "Items requiring follow-up action." If spill bucket test results are over one-year-old, this should be addressed under "Items requiring follow-up action."

To facilitate the annual inspection process, keep the monthly DO reports stored in a folder in chronological order. Train employees so they know where environmental records are kept (including DO reports), just in case the owner/operator is not present during an inspection.

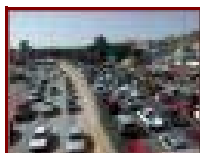
If any questions ever arise, your HMD inspector can always be contacted for assistance.

NOTE 1: The "Training Plus" regulation took effect on July 1, 2005. Refer to the March 2005 newsletter for additional information.

NOTE 2: Changes to Designated Operator must be submitted to HMD within 30 days. A blank monthly DO Report can be found at HMD's Web site: <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/hmd/index.html>

Clandestine Laboratory Chemicals found in the Tijuana-San Diego Border Region

By Aura Quecan
Env. Health Specialist II



The San Diego-Tijuana Border region has three of the most active ports of entry in the United States: San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Tecate. Along with the legal commercial trade, illegal trade of controlled substances occurs. Frequent offenders include cocaine, methamphetamine and its precursors, marijuana, and others.

In the last two years, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials have noted a change in the smuggling pattern into the United States due to the increase of methamphetamine laboratories along the Mexican border. There is an increase in the smuggling of synthesized crystal methamphetamine and a sharp decrease in methamphetamine precursors.

Where are these precursors coming from?

Methamphetamine precursors arrive in Mexico from China, India, and Chile. However, due to the short sentencing time faced by a person caught smuggling them as compared to the severe sentencing times associated with methamphetamine smuggling, precursors are still being imported into San Diego. The precursors smuggled across the border to support local and small clandestine laboratories are red phosphorous, iodine, hydriodic acid, methamphetamine oil and ephedrine.

Who finds these precursors?

In recent years, coordinated efforts by representatives of law enforcement agencies and DEH's Hazardous Incident Response Team (HIRT) have successfully prevented an increase in the number of methamphetamine labs in San Diego County.



The few clandestine laboratories still operating and the vehicles used to haul methamphetamine precursors present a challenge to these agencies and a serious health risk to individuals of the general public that discover them. Their chemical properties make methamphetamine precursors highly toxic and people finding them can be exposed by simply breathing them.

How are precursors smuggled into the country?

Methamphetamine precursors are smuggled in the same compartments used to smuggle narcotics. Law enforcement officials and the DEH-HIRT Team are finding these precursors in several places such as: hidden compartments in door panels, fake gas tanks, under seats, tires, make-shift van or truck compartments, plastic containers, fiberboard drums and others.



Gas tanks are commonly used to smuggle methamphetamine precursors.

What indicators signal the presence of methamphetamine precursors in vehicles?

There are smells and colors associated with some of these chemicals. Iodine has a musty smell, similar to the smell of dirty socks. A smell of rotten eggs can signal the presence of hydriodic acid. In addition, both of these chemicals produce a burnt orange or rust color stain on most containers, with the exception of glass and cardboard.

Since other precursors do not have significant indicators, law enforcement agents or first responders must act on the principle that any unknown or suspicious material encountered during an inspection, or when responding to a hazardous materials incident, can potentially be a precursor. Proper personal protective equipment must be used to safely handle the material and prevent uncontrolled reactions.

Red Phosphorous

In methamphetamine labs, red phosphorous is combined with Iodine to make hydriodic acid, which is used in the production of methamphetamine. Red phosphorous reacts with water vapor and oxygen in the air to form phosphine gas or phosphorous pentoxide, which if inhaled can affect the nervous system, gastrointestinal tract, lungs and heart.

Red phosphorous is classified as a flammable solid and a combustible. In the presence of a source of ignition such as heat, friction, static electrical spark, oxidizing agents or physical impact, Red phosphorous may ignite.

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Clandestine Laboratory Chemicals at the Border

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When dealing with red phosphorous, it is important to avoid conditions such as light, ignition sources, dust generation, excess heat, oxidizers, flammable materials, friction, and physical impact that may cause a reaction. When red phosphorous undergoes combustion, it forms a white dense smoke of phosphorous pentoxide. The smoke readily absorbs water from the atmosphere and phosphoric acid is produced. The acid could be produced in the lungs of the first responders if they inhale the smoke while responding to an incident. When suspecting red phosphorous, first responders must wear special protective clothing and positive pressure self-contained breathing apparatus. The spilled material must be covered with wet sand, clay or ground limestone. If fire is involved, the site must be approached from upwind to avoid hazardous vapors and toxic decomposition products.

Iodine



Iodine looks like grayish-black crystals. Iodine is an oxidizer and it is highly reactive.

It reacts violently with liquid chlorine, acetaldehyde or acetylene gas. Iodine is corrosive and an irritant if inhaled, ingested, or comes in contact with the skin. At room temperature, its crystals form a purple gas which is an extreme respiratory track irritant. Iodine gas causes chest tightness, sore throat, spasms, inflammation, fluid accumulation in the voice box, upper airways and lungs.

In handling an incident involving Iodine, first responders must wear impervious chemical resistant gloves, protective clothing, and a full face-piece self-contained breathing apparatus.

Hydriodic Acid

Hydriodic Acid is another chemical



that is either used or synthesized in methamphetamine labs. It is a colorless to yellow or brown

liquid with an acrid odor. Due to the highly corrosive nature of the acid, first responders must wear special protective clothing and a positive pressure self-contained breathing apparatus. Hydriodic acid is a strong acid and reacts with a broad range of materials. It causes severe eye, respiratory system and skin burns.

Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine

Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are two more precursors for amphetamines. Although they have the same molecular formula and the same sequence of bonds, they are different in their molecular structure. Ephedrine can be a waxy solid or present white to colorless granules, powder or crystals. Pseudoephedrine is a white powder. Both materials may turn yellow if they are left standing a long time. Each one of these materials has a different pharmaceutical use. They are often marketed as white, red or blue tablets. In some methamphetamine labs, the tablets are processed to separate the ephedrine and pseudoephedrine from the other components of the tablets. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are

incompatible with strong oxidants and undergo hazardous decomposition producing nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen and hydrogen chloride gas.

First responders can wear personal



protective clothing only when encountering the chemicals in tablet form. However,

if the chemicals are in powder form, the responders must also wear a self-contained breathing apparatus to prevent the risk of inhalation.

Red phosphorus, iodine, hydriodic acid, and ephedrine/pseudoephedrine are just four of the illegal chemicals that are found in clandestine laboratories and can be encountered in different transportation vehicles. Law enforcement and first responders have the potential of finding these chemicals during incidents along the United States and Mexico border. It is very important for agents to be properly trained and conscious about the hazards these substances present to adequately handle and respond without jeopardizing their own health, the public, and the environment.

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First Regional Environmental Symposium

By Ellen Schulte
Environmental Health Specialist III

The First Regional Environmental Symposium was held April 28, 2005 at the Southwestern Community College (SWC) campus in Chula Vista. This event was the first of its kind in south San Diego County and it exemplified the success of collaboration and dedication to environmental education.

SWC Environmental Technology and Career Services departments took the lead with grant funding, event planning, coordination, and volunteer recruitment. The County of San Diego, Department of Environmental Health (DEH), Hazardous Materials Division (HMD) complemented this effort with additional planning assistance and participation. Other key players included the DEH-Community Health Division, the Negocio Verde Task Force, the San Diego Regional Environmental Business Resource Assistance Center, Cuyamaca Community College, and the SWC Student Environmental Club.



Aura Quecan, from HMD's Hazardous Incident Response Team, describing the equipment used by Emergency Responders.

The symposium offered three specific training workshops, environmental experts speaking throughout the day and over 20 booths staffed with environmental organizations that provided educational materials.

The morning workshop, ***Women in Environmental Careers***, featured a panel of women representing the environmental field in industry, academia and government. An interactive question and answer dialogue developed between attendees and the panel. This workshop was standing room only with over 60 attendees who continued to ask questions well into the break period. Offered with simultaneous Spanish translation, over 20 attendees took advantage of this service.

The ***Automotive Pollution Prevention Workshop***, offered in Spanish and English, also drew another large audience that included automotive technology students, do-it-yourselfers, and some local auto shop owners and employees. Speakers from the HMD and the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District discussed regulatory requirements and pollution prevention. Part of the workshop was to discuss "green" business practices, or environmental regulatory compliance and conservation efforts through implementation of pollution prevention strategies; energy and water conservation; and solid waste reduction and recycling.

Attendees received free used oil containers, rags, funnels and raffle prizes courtesy of the Negocio Verde (Green Business) Task Force, which promotes "green" business practices among businesses in the

region. As a newly identified "Green Business", the auto repair facility at SWC shared with the audience the work they have done to reduce waste and conserve resources. For more information about pollution prevention and how to be a "Green Business," visit www.sdgreenbiz.org

The final workshop of the day, ***Pollution Prevention Basics***, had a slim but enthusiastic crowd. The workshop began with an overview of the importance of pollution prevention and how it can be implemented both at work and at home. The training included a hands-on activity where attendees learned how to determine potential hazards and safer alternatives to the everyday household products. Attendees were very impressed with how the simple task of properly reading a label can help them make better purchasing decisions.

The First Regional Environmental Symposium was a resounding success with over 400 people attending, even amidst one of the rainiest days on record for San Diego County!



Ellen Schulte, HMD's Pollution Prevention Specialist, at the Automotive Pollution Prevention workshop. Presentations were displayed in English and Spanish with simultaneous translation.

María Martínez

(continued from page 1)

are present all around us and interact with the environment. Class involved many laboratory experiments where students conducted research and became familiar with the scientific method.

María learned more than science in that class. She also learned about the working environment in the science field and what was involved in pursuing an entry level position. Guest speakers were part of their class; they talked about different careers in science. One of those speakers was from the Department of Environmental Health. Maria learned about the important role that Environmental Health Specialists play in

protecting public health, safety, and the environment. At the end of the semester students were responsible for creating job portfolios, preparing for job interviews, and applying for internships. In this process, María learned about the Student Worker Program at the Department of Environmental Health and quickly applied for one of several positions that are offered periodically to high school and college students interested in environmental health careers.

María was successful in her interview, and in the summer of 2000, was hired as a student worker for the Land and Water Quality Division. María did such a good job as a student worker that when the in-

ternship was over at the end of August, she was offered a permanent position as a student worker for the Underground Storage Tank Group.

After a few months, Maria was promoted to a Temporary Intermediate Clerk and, in the summer of 2002, Maria was hired as a Permanent Intermediate Clerk. This position has allowed María to continue attending classes at night while working to pay for her college expenses at San Diego State University, where she is majoring in Environmental Science.

María's goal is to become a Registered Environmental Health Specialist. All of her co-workers in the Department of Environmental Health appreciate her hard work and determination.

National Pollution Prevention Week, September 19-23, 2005

USEFUL HMD PHONE NUMBERS

Hazardous Materials
Duty Desk
619-338-2231

Hazardous Materials
Business Plan Check
619-338-2232

HMD Permitting Section
619-338-2251

General Underground Storage
Tank (UST) Permitting Info.
619-237-8451

UST Appointment Scheduling
619-338-2214

UST Plan Check
619-338-2207

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Physicist

Sylvia Mosse
Supervising EHS
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Ed Slater
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Michael Dorsey
HMD Chief

John Misleh
Supervising EHS
East County

John Kolb
Supervising EHS
South County

Nick Vent
Supervising EHS
Emergency Response

Mike Vizzier
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Central County

The Environmental Press is published by the San Diego County CUPA
San Diego County Department of Environmental Health, Hazardous Materials Division

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